

First business moves onto Dudley's Very Light Rail site

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A technology company focussed on decarbonising rail freight is the first to move into Dudley as part of the revolutionary Very Light Rail project.

Dudley Council and BCIMO, which operates the test track and facilities, has welcomed Motive Zero to the town centre.

Motive Zero, working with its partner, Meteor Power, will use the new test track to undertake pioneering work to hybridise a Class 37 diesel locomotive as well as a Class 08 diesel shunter, making them cleaner and more energy efficient. The projects are receiving support from the Department for Transport and Innovate UK's 'First of A Kind Rail Innovation Fund'.

Very Light Rail, which runs from the foot of Castle Hill to Cinder Bank Island, supports Dudley's ambition of being an international centre for rail innovation.

In August last year the West Midlands Combined Authority supported a £13million bid to bridge the remaining funding required for the scheme.

The combined authority has also supported the VLR scheme as part of its wider vision for the West Midlands.

Councillor Simon Phipps, cabinet member for regeneration and enterprise, said: “I’m delighted to welcome Motive Zero today and it has been fascinating to hear the team speak about the game changing technologies they are exploring.

“We continue to work closely with BCIMO as we take the next steps on our journey to becoming global leaders in rail innovation and greener transport solutions.

“We will work closely with Motive Zero, BCMIO and all our partners to continue with the fantastic Very Light Rail programme.”

Mike Edwards, director at Motive Zero, added: “Passenger rail usually grabs the headlines leaving the freight sector largely unsupported when it comes to reducing emissions. Retrofit hybrid electric powertrain conversions allows freight operators to reduce operating costs and leverage existing asset value, thus reducing capital expenditure and avoiding the high greenhouse emissions generated by building new locomotives.

“The facilities at the VLRNIC are ideal for us to develop the new solutions. Once proven, Motive Zero will attract work to convert many other locomotives on the Dudley site, to help move the rail freight industry towards net zero emissions.”

Nick Mallinson, CEO of BCIMO, said: “Our new test track provides a major step forward in the delivery of a world class innovation centre and I am pleased to welcome our first client.”

The centre aims to develop a new Very Light Rail (VLR) industry, encouraging market demand, developing new solutions and creating a UK manufacturing supply chain centred on the Black Country. VLR offers a new, lower-cost, public transport solution that is set to transform the rail industry, providing integrated VLR systems as an alternative to heavy rail and traditional Metro transport.

The new centre, to be completed early next year, will sit next to the test track and is being delivered by the council. The centre will boast a triple-height engineering hall, research laboratories, conference and seminar rooms and offices for 45 people. There will also be public areas, including exhibition spaces and an auditorium.

For more information people can visit www.regeneratingdudley.org.uk/ and www.bcimo.co.uk

Photo credit: Dudley Council